



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA Metropolitan Planning Organization

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Minutes of May 28, 2003

1:30 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room

(County Commissioners' Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	GDOT/MPO	Patty Eason	NCDOT – Division 7
Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO
John Hunsinger	NCDOT	Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO
Scott Rhine	PART	Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO
Scott Walston	NCDOT – Statewide Planning	Philip Kempf	GDOT/MPO
Tom Martin	Greensboro Planning Dept.	Paul Muschick	<i>News & Record</i>
S. Frank Wyatt	GSO Eng. & Inspections	Allen Purser	GSO Chamber of Commerce
Adam Fischer	GDOT/MPO	Benjamin Julian	NC A&T State University
Mark Kirstner	Guilford Co. Planning	Chris Rhodes	Emert Reporting Service
Fred Fontana	Guilford Co. Transportation		

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of April 23, 2003

Scott Rhine moved for approval of the minutes. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Proposed Thoroughfare Plan Amendments

Tyler Meyer stated that the Proposed Thoroughfare Plan Amendments were developed through the work conducted on the Airport Area Transportation Study, which was a cooperative effort between the MPO, and a



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range of other regional planning partners, including PART, NCDOT, Guilford County Planning, and the other MPOs in the area. The study was conducted over the last couple of years, with technical

work led by Scott Walston. Scott Walston was assisted by a Project Steering Committee, which included representatives from the several agencies that were involved. The study demonstrates the need for new freeway connections in the airport area. The identified connections include: a freeway connection from I-40 / Business I-40 to NC 68, then carrying I-73 to the Greensboro Western Urban Loop via Bryan Boulevard; a freeway connection from Forsyth County to the proposed I-40 / NC 68 / I-73 Connector; and a freeway extension of Sandy Ridge Road from West Market Street to the interchange of the proposed I-40 / NC 68 / I-73 Connector with the proposed Forsyth Airport Connector. The need for these facilities were based on mobility and access in the airport area and the entire region in future years. Without these facilities, such as I-40 and NC 68, they would reach unacceptable levels of gridlock conditions in future years.

The study also looked at alternative routing configurations for these facilities and alternative interchange locations. Sixteen alternatives were developed in that process. These were narrowed down to four alternatives, which were included in the handout material given to the Committee. A final recommendation was made for the proposed corridors, and the recommendations were based, first and foremost on technical assessments of what would yield the most efficient movement of traffic in future years. This means that the heaviest traffic flows are served with the shortest, most direct routes. The study sought to minimize negative impacts of the facilities in future years, including impacts to the environment, such as wetlands and stream crossings, historic and archaeological resources, and existing communities. Public comments received through the public review process, were also considered when making these recommendations. The study has taken a macroscopic view of the issues in the area at this time.

These amendments will allow further study to proceed on the identified corridors. In order for these amendments to become official they must be adopted by the TAC and the Board of Transportation. This would allow the next steps in the process to proceed. The first step would involve evaluating these connections through the Long Range Transportation Plan update, which will be conducted over the next year, and will allow an examination of the surface street connection needs in the area, as well as a re-evaluation of the configurations of the freeway-level routes if warranted. In the midterm, the goal would be to enter the environmental phase. This would provide a microscopic evaluation of these proposed facilities and would look at, in great detail, the purpose and need for the projects to determine if they are needed, as previously indicated. It would also look at the environmental impacts in an effort to provide a route and facility configuration that would meet the transportation needs, while minimizing negative impacts. The environmental review process will culminate with the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD), which would determine whether these facilities may move forward. There are certain contingencies for entering the environmental phase. First, funding to support the study needs to be identified, which could take a considerable amount of time. It is recommended that a priority be placed on advancing this alternative to the environmental study phase as soon as possible.

Given the level of planning that has been done, the development ordinance implications of amending the Thoroughfare Plan would include several fairly minimal restrictions. There would be no effect on already approved developments, new site plan development, uses of land, or sales of property. Future subdivision development, and conditional use rezonings could be required to place a note on the plat, development plan, or deed, indicating the anticipated location of the corridor. Also, in cases where there is adequate space on an affected parcel to achieve a comparable level of development, while accommodating the freeway corridor, right-of-way dedication could be required.

The amendments to the Thoroughfare Plan are based on the findings and recommendations of the Airport Area Transportation Study (AATS), although staff recommendations include several deviations from those of the study. The first recommended amendment adds the proposed I-40 / NC 68 / I-73 Connector corridor. Staff recommend that in the vicinity of Cude Road, this corridor be shifted to the south. This would reduce the number of residential properties in the Quail Creek neighborhood that would be crossed by the corridor, as it is shown in the AATS.

The second recommended amendment adds the proposed Forsyth Airport Connector corridor to the Thoroughfare Plan. Staff also recommend retaining the extension of Bryan Boulevard, contrary to the recommendations of the AATS. It recommended deleting the Bryan Boulevard extension to Pleasant Ridge Road. At this point, the staff recommends keeping that extension. The reason for the recommendation is that we have envisioned conducting an analysis of the surface street activity needs under the Long Range Transportation Plan update, which would resolve whether the extension would be needed. The final determination will be made after further studies are conducted.

The third recommendation is to add the Sandy Ridge Road Extension corridor, and to delete the Sandy Ridge Road / Pleasant Ridge Road Connector, which is currently shown on the Thoroughfare Plan. In addition, staff recommend that the section of Sandy Ridge Road, from I-40 to Market Street, be reclassified as a major thoroughfare. Currently, this facility is classified as a local street. The reason for this change is evident in the need for Sandy Ridge Road to be extended northward to meet the I-40 / NC 68 / I-73 Connector and the Forsyth Airport Connector, rather than north-eastward to Pleasant Ridge Road, which would be overburdened by the resulting traffic.

Of the four final alternatives that were the basis of the recommendations of the AATS, Alternative 2 was selected because it serves the primary traffic flow in a direct and efficient manner. The corridor from I-40/Business 40 to NC 68 and I-73 has been estimated to have volume of approximately 70,000 vehicles per day. By serving the dominant or highest traffic volumes with the shortest routes, the greatest traffic benefits are achieved, which in turn minimizes air pollution because fewer miles would be traveled.

Another benefit of Alternative 2 is that it provides a smooth movement for I-73 traffic through the study area. That's in contrast to Alternative Number 4, which would have routed the I-40/Business 40 connector to join the existing Bryan Boulevard.

Alternative 2 also has lower costs than the other alternatives and appears relatively effective at minimizing other impacts. These impacts are summarized on page 6 in the "Comparison Matrix" of the handout. The comparison shows that Alternative 2 did as well or better than the other alternatives in a majority of categories. Alternative 2 did particularly well in the categories of cost, distance and wetlands. It had a comparable number of residential relocations and business relocations anticipated as the other alternatives.

Another factor contributing to the selection of Alternative 2, is that it supports land use planning goals, more effectively than Alternatives 1 and 3. Both the Airport Area Plan and the Western Guilford Area Plan called for keeping commercial and industrial development further south with primarily residential development occurring in stages in the north. These goals would encounter conflicts if any of the other alternatives were selected.

One factor that is unlike the other findings of the AATS, is in regard to the public comments received. Most commenters preferred alternatives other than Alternative 2. A public meeting was held on April the 24th and there was a public comment that followed over the subsequent month. Approximately 150 people attended the meeting and approximately 106 written comments were received. The comments expressed a wide range of concerns. Some of the concerns included: local roadway access, impacts to property value and ability to sell affected properties, and disruption of the peaceful countryside. There were also concerns regarding need for the Forsyth County Airport connector. Concerns were also expressed about the cost estimation procedures for housing relocations. There were concerns that Alternative 2 appears to cross the most densely populated areas and several areas that have recently been approved for development.

Among the comments received, 76 commenters specifically recommended Alternative 3. Also, there was a significant number of people who, although they preferred Alternative 4, supported Alternative 3 instead, because Alternative 4 was not feasible. Six comments supported Alternative 4, while four comments supported Alternative 2. There were also resolutions of support from Winston-Salem-Forsyth MPO and PART regarding the process in general, without reference to specific alternatives. The Winston-Salem Journal also published an editorial in support of the process of planning for the region's future. This round of citizen comments was in contrast to the comments submitted in response to the first AATS public meeting. Among those comments, sixty-eight supported Alternative 4, forty-seven supported Alternative 3, and six supported Alternative 2. It is noteworthy that a significant number of those commenters were from the Winston-Salem area, whereas the in the second comment period, the commenters represented an area more closely surrounding the airport.

The task now at hand in this process is the approval of the proposed amendments by the TAC, which would then be followed up with approval by the Board of Transportation. Incorporating these amendments into the Thoroughfare plan is required in order for them to be eligible for further study. The amendments would then be able to enter the environmental study process, in which the TAC and Board of Transportation will have an opportunity to set priorities for what issues the environmental document will examine. It is likely that for detailed analysis, these corridors would be divided into smaller segments to be studied one at a time. The staff recommends that the TAC, NCDOT and our regional partners place a high priority on secured the funding necessary to advance these corridors to the environmental study stage. Obtaining this funding could take at least 2 to 2 years, while study itself could require 5 to 7 years and would involve the review and concurrence of various resource agencies and ultimately approval by the Federal Highway Administration through a record of decision. Once the record of decision is issued, the project would be able to advance to the transportation improvement program, at which point the TAC and the Board of Transportation would then need to evaluate these proposed facilities in the context of the other transportation priorities in the area.

The recommended action today is for the TCC to endorse this set of recommendations.

Mark Kirstner asked whether the I-40 / Business 40 / I-73 Connector would be routed along the current Pleasant Ridge Road corridor, or some other configuration. Tyler Meyer explained that although the proposed route for the I-40 / Business 40 / I-73 Connector is shown with a grade separation that appears to cross Pleasant Ridge Road, the connector would actually remain north of Pleasant Ridge Road. Jim Westmoreland added that as further study is conducted, it will become clearer how both the local roadway access and freeway corridors could be served.

Tom Martin moved to endorse the recommended amendments. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Business Items

1. Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program FY 2004-2010

Jeff Sovich stated that this item has arisen from FHWA's newly articulated process for adoption of the MTIP. Federal regulations require that the MTIP be accompanied by a conformity determination report. The conformity determination report is primarily a statement by the MPO and NCDOT that the program of projects in the MTIP is consistent with the adopted Long Range Transportation Plan, as well as the current conformity analysis. If throughout the process of developing the MTIP, the schedule of a regionally significant project is adjusted such that it crosses a horizon year, or if a new project of regional significance is added to the program, it's likely that a new conformity analysis would be needed in order to be able to adopt the MTIP. However, in any case, the MTIP needs to conform before it can be adopted.

This document simply says, "Yes, we've gone through the inter-agency process, evaluated the MTIP as it is, and it appears to conform to both Long Range Transportation Plan and the conformity analysis."

Through this process, there were concerns raised by the inter-agency team, which includes NCDOT, NCDENR, FHWA, FTA and EPA. But in the review of the MTIP, the MPO was able to clarify and explain the points of concern those agencies had, and they acknowledged that the MTIP was in fact conforming.

The conformity determination report is required to be available for a minimum 30-day public review and comment period. That period began May 21st and will extend through June 20th. Once the public review and comment period is completed, the public comments and MPO responses to those comments will be incorporated into the document, and the final MTIP and conformity determination report will be adopted by the TAC in June, with adoption by the Board of Transportation in July.

The draft final MTIP has been prepared and includes some changes to several major projects. Among these is the Greensboro Signal and ITS System replacement, which has been accelerated from construction in post years to construction in 2008. On the US 421 Interchanges, the Woody Mill Road interchange has been accelerated from right-of-way in 2008 and construction in 2010, to right-of-way in 2006 and construction in 2009, whereas Neeley Road has been pushed back from right-of-way in 2006 and construction in 2008, to right-of-way in 2009 and construction in post years. Finally, the US 29 at Eckerson Road Interchange revision, which was not previously in the MTIP as a funded project other than a feasibility study, has been added with right-of-way and construction both scheduled for post years. MPO staff will be administering the environmental analysis and preliminary design on this project.

2. NC Moving Ahead!

John Hunsinger of NCDOT, Division 7 advised the Committee that this program is a very ambitious statewide program. This program will allow the State to sell bonds to borrow \$700 million from the highway trust fund to pay for projects that would previously have been paid for with cash. The bonds were approved for sale several

years ago, but have not been sold. We're now taking advantage of these bond to generate capital. The key point is that this is a two-year program. Eligible projects include

modernization, safety improvements, strengthening, and structural rehabilitation, but the selected routes must not involve right-of-way acquisition, utility problems, or environmental problems.

A lot of response has been received from the five counties in Division 7, which has been given an allocation of \$23.5 million for fiscal year 2004 and an allocation of \$31.5 million for fiscal year 2005. There will be an attempt to select one project from each county during both years of the program for Division 7. A portion of the money will be delegated to replacement of mostly rural type bridges in trying to improve the safety or capacity, at an average of approximately \$500,000 per bridge.

Candidate projects have been received from local governmental agencies, MPOs, and RPOs, throughout the five county area. The projects are currently being evaluated to see which ones meet the criteria on an overall basis. After the projects are selected, a list will be submitted to the chief engineer in Raleigh by June 15th for his review and comments. The scoping process will be performed while waiting for approval from the chief engineer. The scoping process for both years' projects must be submitted to Raleigh by August 1st. Authorization for the projects should be received from the chief soon thereafter. Once approval is given to proceed, the governmental agencies will be notified. February, 2004 is the target date to let the first year's projects to contract.

We are currently evaluating the environmental considerations for projects in the three counties that we have completed our cursory review on. The aim is to determine if there is anything on any of these projects that will be an obstacle to completing them within the allotted 2 year timeframe.

Greensboro has submitted a very comprehensive list of requested projects such as improving intersections, adding sidewalks, turn lanes and medians along the Wendover Corridor at Bridford, Landmark Center, Stanley Road, I-40, and Big Tree Way. Improvements are also requested along West Market Street to Holden Road. Traffic signals are requested at certain locations throughout the city. Resurfacing is requested for thirteen roadways within the city limits. Pleasant Garden has requested resurfacing and shoulder repair projects. Some of the projects requested by Pleasant Garden and Greensboro may be able to be funded out of our other sources of maintenance funds. Projects in the Summerfield area that have been submitted include 7 or 8 intersection improvements requested by the Summerfield Fire Department as well as some bicycle routes.

Selection of mass transit and enhancement types of projects will be handled by David King's office, and the candidates were to be submitted directly to David King. David King's office has received requests from other counties for projects such as a computerized signal system, an ITS system and cameras. The traffic items and the bridge items will be coming out of funding we are to receive for highway projects in this program. Municipalities can greatly facilitate our project selection process by acquiring needed right-of-way. Projects in the \$2.5 million range are being considered for this program; smaller projects are less likely to yield significant improvements and are not the focus of this program. Projects that would involve right-of-way acquisition by the State, or that cross a waterway, are beyond the scope of this program.

Jim Westmoreland asked when the program would be passed through the General Assembly and arrived at the Governor's desk to be signed and implemented. John Hunsinger advised he has not heard but is hopeful it will be soon, certainly before the end of the fiscal year.

Jim Westmoreland advised that Mayor Holliday, who serves in the NC League of Municipalities has urged the General Assembly and specific legislators in Raleigh to consider an element of MPO review

and approval of the priorities that are set through the Moving Ahead program, both for the highway side and the transit side. He asked how this would be handled if it gets incorporated into the enacted legislation. Patty Eason advised that the division engineer currently has final authority on the selection of projects. John Hunsinger added that nothing has been mentioned alluding to an MPO role in final project selection. It is hoped that the MPOs would support the selections of the division engineer, since the timeframe for the program is so tight.

Mark Kirstner asked what the source of the funds will be. John Hunsinger explained that the Highway Trust Fund was established with a bond obligating authority, of which \$700 million remains unused. The Moving Ahead program will use liquid assets currently in the trust fund and replace that money with proceeds from the sale of the now dormant bonds. The challenge in getting this program to work has been changing the law that describes the projects eligible for Highway Trust Fund expenditure. Mark Kirstner asked how the Moving Ahead program originated. Doug Galyon advised that he, Secretary Tippet, and senior NCDOT staff spent a year developing this concept because they knew the money was available. This program created an opportunity to make substantial maintenance and restoration improvements throughout the state. It was presented to the governor in November of 2002, and he approved it in January of 2003.

Patty Eason advised that right-of-way issues would be possible in second year projects. Jim Westmoreland asked if it would be possible for cities to enter into municipal agreements with the state, having NCDOT fund the work, but the city would actually handle the bidding and construction of the projects, to relieve some of the work load on the division-level. Patty Eason explained that this would be possible and added that cities could also contribute their own funds to Moving Ahead projects in order to enable construction of more elaborate projects.

3. Guilford County Transportation Department Update

Fred Fontana advised that for many years, Guilford County's official position was that transportation, especially public transportation, is an urban issue and made no effort to address transportation. In 1996-1997 the County Planning Department was receiving funds from NCDOT and undertook a county-wide transportation development plan, which recommended the creation of an independent county transportation department. In July 1998, a transportation department was created.

Currently, the department serves five main groups of clients. The first group consists of Medicaid recipients who reside in Guilford County. This service includes transportation to doctors' appointments. The Transportation Department does not own any vehicles, but acts as a provider to the Social Services Department through contractors and other municipal or county transportation providers. Approximately 12,000 trips per month are provided for the County's 38,000 Medicaid recipients, an increase from 5,000 trips per month when the service began in January, 1999.

The second largest group of clients transported is the elderly. The primary destinations include congregate meal sites and senior centers in both High Point and Greensboro, employment for working seniors, shopping, and orientation facilities for elderly immigrants. The number of standing order trips provided to the elderly ranges from 150 to 175 trips a day.

The third largest group transported is the disabled population. This program is not countywide. Only county residents that live outside the city limits of High Point and Greensboro are eligible. Because High Point and Greensboro, have fixed route bus services, they are obligated by the Americans with

Disabilities Act to provide transportation for the disabled within their cities. We provide the service throughout the rest of the county, provided that the trip either originates or terminates outside Greensboro and High Point city limits.

The fourth group transported is the rural general public. These are residents that live outside of the city limits who need to get to work, to the doctor or to school. Various funding sources allow transportation services for the Medicaid and elderly clients to be provided free of charge. The disabled and the rural general public are charged \$1.60 per one way trip.

The fifth group of clients are served through a small program called Work First Transitional Transportation, developed by the State DOT. This program is for residents who were previously receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, who are now working at least 20 hours per week. This service is a safety net that provides financial assistance for these residents get to work.

The department also has an inter-local agreement with the City of Greensboro, through which the department provides the call-taking, scheduling, and routing for their SCAT clients. The city helps subsidize the salary for three employees in the department's office to schedule the trips.

The final service provided by the department is program, which has developed in the past year and a half, with the assistance of PART and NCDOT. The Guilford County Department of Transportation is the lead agency in coordinating the out-of-county non-emergency medical transportation throughout the PART service area. A web site is now available where individuals, doctors' offices, social service agencies, and transportation officials can schedule a trip on-line.

Overall, the department schedules an average of 900 trips per day for its own clients and another 500 trips per day for SCAT clients. The demand for these services is growing rapidly, and more rapidly than either the city or the county would like to see. As a result of our concentrated effort to counteract this trend, the percentage of medicaid users on fixed route buses, as opposed to demand responsive vans and taxis, has increased from 5% to roughly 20%. This has saved the Medicaid program over \$100,000 per year. The department's total annual budget is around \$3 million.

Jim Westmoreland asked if the rural general public transportation program offers transportation anywhere within Guilford County. Fred Fontana advised it was anywhere within Guilford County. It's primarily for employment, medical or school purposes.

4. Long Range Transportation Plan

Tyler Meyer advised that the information included in the handout distributed to Committee members, contains specifications for the scope for that project. The purpose of the specifications is to give the Committee the opportunity to review the proposed changes. He asked for feedback and comments from the Committee by June 10th. A meeting may be scheduled for Committee members to discuss the project and its scope in more detail.

A complete reassessment of the transportation plan, and its various components, including the Throughfare Plan, a collector streets plan, and a multi-modal transportation plan, is needed. This would allow thoughtful analysis

of the issues. Public involvement, in terms of developing a vision for transportation in the MPO area will be emphasized. Negotiations with consultants will begin in the next month or so, and the project will begin in July.

5. MPO Strategic Reports

Craig McKinney advised that the NCDOT Rail Division held a meeting on Tuesday, May 27th regarding the traffic separation study for the rail lines in the eastern part of Guilford County. They will be repeating that meeting again Thursday evening from 4 to 7:00 p.m. at Gibsonville Elementary School.

There will be an informal public hearing on June 2nd for the Hilltop Road widening project. That meeting will be held at Gate City Baptist Church. NCDOT will be presenting a plan to widen Hilltop Road, from Adams Farm Parkway to just east of Guilford College Road, to a five-lane facility with a sidewalk on the south side. The meeting will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Jim Westmoreland noted that it matches the City's project to widen from Pennoak to Adams Farm Parkway. Together these two projects will provide a multi-lane section through that area.

Other Items

1. TCC Member Update

None entered.

The TCC adjourned at 2:45 p.m.